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'Now that it is clear that our nation has abundant resources and wealth the question arises as to how everyone participates in it'.

Setting the Agenda

by JOHN GLADWIN



I am searching for an agenda which might win wide approval in our nation. I am talking about an agenda, not about solutions. There will always be, and should always be, political division and

difference about solutions. The church can participate in the process by working on the agenda which, from a Christian perspective, should be rooted in those human values which Christians can support. So here goes.

The first priority I suggest is *the search for equality in a free society*. This may sound provocative to those inclined to adopt Thatcherite solutions to our problems. It is not meant to be. It is a plea to say that, whatever the form of economic life we adopt, the question of

equality will not go away. Thus if we are to live in a social market economy or a laissez-faire economy we still have to ask how, as a community, we watch over questions of equality.

By equality I do not mean sameness or

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NATIONAL PRIORITIES

In this issue we have two articles on the theme of National Priorities. On this page the Very Rev. John Gladwin looks at what ought to be on Britain's national agenda, while inside Brother Ramon S.S.F. examines priorities from a Kingdom standpoint.

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anything like it. I mean the sort of commitment which ensures that social experience clearly upholds the equal dignity and status of all citizens. That means seeking to provide for all citizens to have access to the means for sustaining their vocation in society — adequate shelter for them and their families, access to work, education for themselves and their children, and health care provision.

Now that it is clear that our nation has abundant resources and wealth the question arises as to how everyone participates in it. If we could get all political parties to accept this as a proper moral agenda we might move forward to a new era of a greater sense of national unity. None of this requires the government to undermine its stress on enterprise and freedom. The language of equality needs detaching from centralized bureaucratic responses to problems. It is a language which Christians of all political persuasions ought to be able to use with integrity.

A second priority I would suggest is *the search for meaningful citizenship*. Here I am deliberately picking up language which the present administration are familiar with and relaxed about. Democratic societies depend for their success on a sense of citizen-responsibility throughout the community. That in turn, to a measure, depends on adequate democratic processes working across society. Mrs. Thatcher's main emphasis thus far has been on reforming economic structures. We need now to turn to political structures.

The development of the EEC through the Single European Act is making us think about power at a European level. The needs of the regions — which differ enormously — raise questions about the adequacy of a democracy whose main structures lead to Westminster. The needs of Northern Ireland, Scotland, the North-East of England, and Wales — to quote but some — point in the direction of some regionalization. We need to think of this not as an extension of local government, but as a devolution of national government.

'Power needs to be given to the people at all sorts of levels'.

Power needs to be given to the people at all sorts of levels if all of us are to be helped to see our responsibilities as citizens. Such talk has parallels in Christian belief and not least in concepts of the church giving expression to our belief in the priesthood of all believers. The church has to be organized in ways which open the door for all its members to find and exercise their several ministries.

The third priority I would suggest is *the search for a sustainable environment*. The Christian church needs to help its members and others away from thinking that the world exists for our benefit alone. A proper balance needs to be struck between our sense of

responsibility to sustain and care for the creation of which we are a part, and our duty to use the resources of the world to support our lives.

It is time for our nation to take a much more vigorous stance on environmental concerns. There are the obvious matters such as the adaptation of fossil fuel power stations to reduce their contribution to the acid rain phenomenon, the need to clean up our coastlines, the need to strengthen processes for recycling waste, a vigorous pursuit of wider use of lead-free petrol. Beyond this we urgently need environmental matters to be integrated into education, and for all aspects of public life to be geared up to include considerations of the implications of this work on the environment at all points of decision-making.

All of this is especially crucial for the UK because of the density of population in these islands. The publicly expressed commitment of the Prime Minister to environmental matters leads me to believe that this is now a commonly agreed agenda. The churches need to welcome this and encourage it. Our conviction about God as creator and redeemer of the world root this in the deepest of theological themes.

'The needs of the poor and excluded will be at the centre of the national debate'.

If we reversed the order of the above three national priorities, then we might talk of the triple agenda of life, liberty and equality springing from the heart of our faith and providing an agenda for our nation of environmental concerns, the extension of democracy and the pursuit of human equality. I believe we may be living in a moment when it could be possible to get considerable agreement on the urgency of this agenda. If so, then once again, the needs of the poor and excluded will be at the centre of the national debate. For this to be the case the government will need to feel that the enterprise culture is secure for the foreseeable future.

The question will be whether the government has the imagination and energy to enter these fields as a matter of priority. For the rest of the political spectrum the question will concern its capacity to catch up with what has happened and open up real debate about ways of moving towards a more equitable, open and responsible community. If the church can have the courage to hold on to its persistent concerns in these principled areas it may yet be seen as having taken a significant part in creating the political agenda for the coming period.

John Gladwin is Provost of Sheffield, and was formerly Secretary to the Board for Social Responsibility of the General Synod of the Church of England. His book The Good of the People (Marshall Pickering) appeared recently.

Spirit of Assisi

by VALERIE BUCKNALL T.O./S.S.F.



The Spirit of Assisi made itself known again last August when over 600 people gathered there as part of an ecumenical campaign launched by the W.C.C. on the three linked issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation — or JPIC for short. About a third of those present were Franciscans.

I felt very happy and excited to be in Assisi for the first time. Being in Franciscans for Justice and Peace had given me support and hope in my feelings of powerless concern about the world — and here in Assisi I discovered many more people fired with the same concerns and the same hopes. We were there because of our concern about the suffering of people in oppressed countries, in war zones, and living under the nuclear shadow. We were disturbed at the destruction of the environment. Coming together in Assisi enabled us to share in dialogue and to commit ourselves to prayer and action.

We realized that the divisions of nationality, language and tradition that gave us identity, also invited us to overcome the barriers; there was a great sense of unity among us. Walking about the town late into the warm evenings, dancing and singing 'en masse' in the piazzas after services, eating together, talking, sharing . . . I had the feeling that this is what life *should* be like.

A day was devoted to each of the three topics of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We had major addresses and then tackled the topic in small group discussions and workshops. Through top speakers we learned about: work among the inner-city poor in France; Christian and Franciscan bases for peace work; the vision of God's creation; the international debt crisis; and damage caused to the environment by the testing of nuclear weapons in the Nevada desert.

Services were held in the Basilica of S. Francis, the Cathedral of San Rufino, the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli and in the Abbey Church of S. Pietro, and were led by different denominational groups. Morning prayer and singing took place in a beautiful open-air amphitheatre. There were many people from Italy and Spain, and some from France. Dutch and German Protestant churches were well represented. There were a few Franciscan brothers from East Germany and Hungary, and a small number of Anglicans. These included Stephen Veazey from Luton and myself from Bromley, both S.S.F. Tertiaries.

Assisi 88 was one step along the way. After a women's conference in February 1989, the European JPIC process will continue at the Peace with Justice Convention in Basle at Pentecost 1989.



The Cathedral of San Rufino, Assisi.

**To the people of God in Christ
To our churches and parishes in Europe
To all those who seek peace**

Extracts from the letter sent out at the end of the Assisi meeting:

We gathered in Assisi to conduct this dialogue with the help of God, who gave Clare and Francis the strength to live in sisterly and brotherly community with all living creatures . . .

We are urged on by reverence for God's creation, but we also experience other forces at work within ourselves. We want to own creation and exercise arbitrary power over it. By misusing technology we are violent towards creation. We seek not only what we require for our basic needs, we also chase after pointless wealth and waste that which is entrusted to us. The consequences are pollution, devastation, plundering and a constant reduction of the living diversity found in nature . . .

We have been called by God through Jesus Christ. In him we experience how God is just towards everyone, and how we can be just towards one

another. In this way we become the people of God, called amidst the peoples of the world to bring justice and peace . . .

We recognize the injustice to which women have been and still are subjected in church and society. We need visible signs of a change of heart on the part of the churches in respect of discrimination against women.

We are concerned by the enormous debts of the poorer countries. One of the main causes of this is the interest policy pursued by the richer countries. Christians are called to find just solutions to the interest question, based on the Bible.

We see the refugees who seek asylum in our countries as messengers of worldwide injustice. We are called not to restrict the laws of asylum in Europe in preparation for 1992, but to relax them. The European home can only be a happy home if it is a home with open doors.

Community Routes

►► Full Recovery

Brother Michael S.S.F., Minister General of the First Order brothers, is glad to report that he is now well on the way to recovery from his recent operation. In July he went to Papworth Hospital near Cambridge for major surgery to remove a long standing centre of acute and persistent infection. In fact this was a legacy from a condition for which he was a patient in the same hospital nearly 50 years ago — and where he first heard of the Franciscans and Brother Denis S.S.F.!

Papworth has an international reputation for heart and lung operations, and the one on Brother Michael was very successful. Although there are some side effects which will take longer for recovery, both he and the doctors are happy and confident about his future.

Brother Michael began his convalescence in Cornwall, at first under the care of our Tertiary doctor, John Williams and his wife Margaret, and then with generous friends and Companions at Sancreed. Since returning to Cambridge he is beginning to increase his activities, though under doctor's orders he is on 'light duties' to the end of the year. He already has plans to visit all the provinces in 1989.

He says that he would like his friends to join him in giving thanks to God for a real answer to prayer, and he expresses his gratitude for the innumerable letters, cards, messages and flowers he received — far more than he could reply to individually.

►► The Gospel and Affluence

In March the Provincial Engagements Group (formerly the 'Committee on Mission') is holding a day consultation on the gospel to the affluent. Bishop Peter Selby and members of congregations in Barnes — where S.S.F. organized a parish mission — will be taking part.

Brother Bernard S.S.F. says that the background to the consultation is the requests S.S.F. receives to conduct parish missions in many parts of the country: 'We have to keep our priorities under review. Like all Christians in our affluent culture there is a need for us to identify what can be affirmed in the light of the gospel and what must be challenged'.

Brother Bernard works with the Mis-



Sister Beatrice C.S.F. (right) congratulates Sister Phyllis C.S.F. on her life profession.

sion Theological Advisory Group on these issues. The group is established under the auspices of the General Synod Board for Mission and Unity.

►► Scholar Honoured

A book has been published to honour the contribution to biblical scholarship of Brother Barnabas S.S.F. (Professor Barnabas Lindars). Called *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, the book appeared on the occasion of his 65th birthday and is edited by D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson.

The publishers are Cambridge University Press, who laid on what Barnabas himself described as 'a superb presentation dinner' in a private dining room at Clare College Cambridge. Contributors to the book and many other academic friends were present, as well as Brother Reginald representing S.S.F. Prof. C. F. D. Moule made the presentation speech, and Brother Barnabas was given a specially prepared volume bound in blue leather.

All the essays in the book are by distinguished scholars, including Morna Hooker and C. K. Barrett. It contains a bibliography of Brother Barnabas' own writings. He has been Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester since 1978.

►► Reunion at Life Profession

On Saturday, 3 September, at the end of General Chapter week — and symbolizing so much of the thinking there — Sister Phyllis C.S.F. made life vows before the Bishop Protector, the Bishop of Hereford, at Compton Durville.

As well as a large gathering of sisters and brothers dispersing from Hilfield, it was the occasion of a family reunion: five of Phyllis' six brothers and sisters were able to be present at this happy time.

►► Belfast Changes

All Saints Day brought some big changes to the Belfast friary. Brother Roger Damian S.S.F. left after eight years as guardian, and Brother Raymond Christian S.S.F. also left. Roger Damian will be in Tanzania until February, when he will go to Alnmouth. Raymond Christian is now in Edinburgh.

Brother David Jardine S.S.F., the new guardian, records that they 'Both made a very valuable contribution in Belfast and will be much missed. Fortunately as they left Andrew Christopher arrived from Hilfield.

'Although still a novice he is experienced in ministry, especially with young people. This is important as young people ought to be more of a priority with us. If

we are going to attract more Irish vocations then we will need to become known by a younger age group, and say our prayers in the background'.

David Jardine adds that the work of reconciliation will still be in the forefront of Franciscan efforts in Belfast, and he hopes that the friary will come to be used increasingly as a meeting place for clergy and lay people of all denominations.

▶▶ Alnmouth Guardian

Brother Tristram S.S.F. has been elected guardian at Alnmouth in succession to Brother Colin Wilfred S.S.F. For the past three years Tristram has been studying at Cambridge, where he graduated in July with a degree in history.

He is General Secretary of the First Order brothers, and in that capacity recently flew to the Pacific Islands Province to represent Brother Michael at their General Chapter. From 1972-76 he served in Zambia.

▶▶ Ashram Pioneer

The Stepney house was delighted by a surprise visit in November from Dr. Jay N. Bhore, a former member of the Poona Ashram of the Christa Prema Seva Sangha. Father Algy had once lived in this ashram and drew on its rule when formulating S.S.F.'s *Principles*.

Dr. Bhore was attending a social psychiatry conference in England from Milwaukee in the U.S.A., where he practises as a psychiatrist. He had lost touch with S.S.F. a long time ago and on his day off from the conference tracked us down with the help of the British Council of Churches.

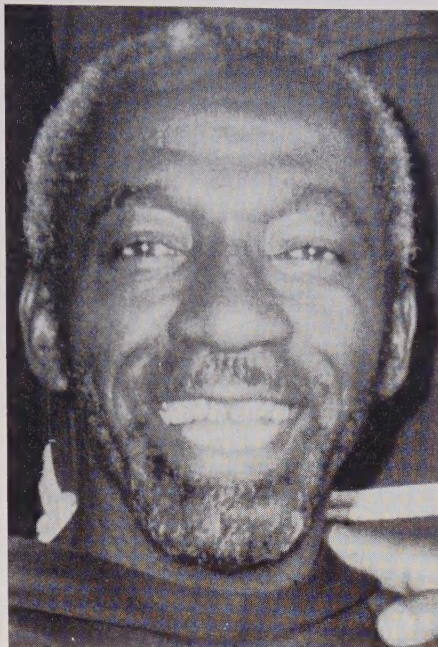
Dr. Bhore lived in the ashram from 1936-1944 and has warm memories of the late Bishop Bill Lash, who was the ashram's head.

'He was a wonderful man', said Dr. Bhore, 'with a genuine love and affection for India. He was ahead of his time in trying to find an expression of Christianity suitable for India'.

▶▶ Life Profession

There was much rejoicing at Glasshampton on 8 October when Brother Dominic Christopher's life profession was received by the Bishop of Worcester, acting on behalf of the Bishop Protector. Brother Peter Douglas acted as deacon at the eucharist, celebrated by the Bishop, with two friends of Dominic Christopher's as lesson readers and his young godson as boat-boy. About 40 people were present.

▶▶ Franciscan Bishop



Brother Desmond S.S.F.

Congratulations to Brother Desmond S.S.F., who was elected Bishop of Belize in November. He comes from that country, a former British colony in Central America. He is a fluent Spanish speaker.

The diocese of Belize belongs to the Province of the West Indies. In fact Brother Desmond has worked in that province for more than 10 years, as a priest in Trinidad. He joined the Society of S. Francis in 1962 and was sent to Zambia in 1967, later serving in Tanzania 1972-75.

Brother Desmond's consecration will take place in Belize on 2 February, and Brother Michael hopes to be present.

▶▶ Professions South and North

The autumn saw the profession of two of our brothers after the completion of the three years of their novitiate.

Brother Jonathan made his commitment in First Vows on 26 October at S. Philip's Church, Plaistow. His parents came from Nottingham for the occasion. Jonathan has been living at Plaistow since the summer and through the life of the house has been involved in working and caring in the local area. He was well supported at the service by many of the people with whom he has already come into contact.

Brother Basil was professed at Alnmouth in a service which had a strong Celtic flavour — for Basil, himself a Scot, is now living and working at the Little Portion Friary, Lothian Road, Edinburgh. Not only was there a good crowd present from north of the border, but the music was unmistakably Scottish, and the eucharist was celebrated according to the rite of the Episcopal Church.

▶▶ Jubilee

Shortly after her return from Australia, Sister Alison Mary C.S.F. celebrated 25 years in vows. Friends joined the sisters at Compton Durville for a lunch on 25 November to mark the occasion and congratulate her.



Sister Elizabeth C.S.F. with the Bishop Protector, Rt. Rev. John Eastaugh, after her ordination as a Deacon in Hereford Cathedral last summer.

▶▶ Hilfield Postulants

David Darling and John Workman became postulants on 3 October at Hilfield Friary. David was previously a nurse in Cambridge, and John is an accountant who shared in the life of the Edinburgh and Alnmouth houses.

Several aspirants are expected at Hilfield at the end of January.

▶▶ Swedish Venture

Sten Reutermo and Fredrik Carlin are at Hilfield from Sweden, where they were working in a city parish as priest and youth worker respectively. With the approval of their bishop they are exploring the possibility of starting a community in the Church of Sweden and are spending a year with S.S.F.

▶▶ New Book

Brother Ramon, Guardian at Glasshampton, has had another book accepted by his publishers. *Soul Friend: A Journey with Thomas Merton* will be published by Marshall Pickering in spring 1989. He is already the author of a trilogy that is selling well (*A Hidden Fire*, *Deeper into God*, and *Fulness of Joy*), and has written four small books in the evangelical spirituality series.

▶▶ Camp Information

The Families' Camp at Hilfield in 1989 is from Friday, 26 July to Monday, 7 August. Applications should be sent to Mrs. Elizabeth Stirling, 14 Redmiles Lane, Ketton, Stamford, Lincs PE9 3RG.

The new secretary for the Youth Camp is Miss Alison Way, 21 Girdlestone Close, Headington, Oxon OX3 7NV. The 1989 Youth Camp is Friday, 11 August to Monday, 21 August and applications should be sent direct to her. Groups of young people with their leaders (about one leader to five) are welcome. The camps have a serious purpose and theme, but there is plenty of time for recreation and for trips to surrounding countryside and sea.

▶▶ Brother Kenneth

Brother Kenneth S.S.F. is keeping well and is looking forward to his birthday on 7 February, and the anniversary of his taking vows on 14 February. He still keeps up a considerable correspondence with companions and friends of many years, including some who used to be on hop-pickers missions.

Back to the Books

Brother Paschal, S.S.F. began his training for ordination at S. Stephen's House, Oxford in September. In November he appeared in a *Sunday Telegraph* photograph which said the students in the picture were at Westcott House in Cambridge — where in fact Sister Hilary, C.S.F. is studying.

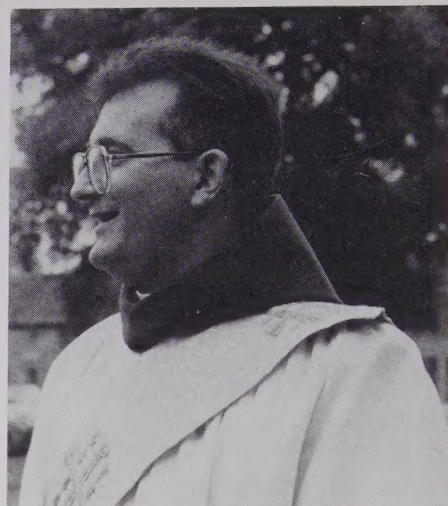
Paschal preached at Peter Douglas' first Mass and will be helping at Keble College during the University Mission in February. This will be led by Bishop Richard Holloway of Edinburgh, who was once Paschal's rector at Old S. Paul's, Edinburgh.

And from Westcott House, *Sister Hilary* writes:

Having been accepted by A.C.C.M. for training for ordination to the diaconate, I asked for and have been given a year here. It's a very short time to adapt to living in another sort of community. There's the daily round of office and eucharist — the 'same but different'.

With a gap of more than 25 years since leaving university, I find that application to academic work and producing essays is a stimulating challenge.

It is so good to be here, not least to be with a very mixed student body from all the four colleges of the Cambridge Federation: Westminster (U.R.C.), Wesley (Methodist), Ridley and Westcott — a



Brother Peter Douglas S.S.F. was ordained priest by the Bishop of Jarrow at S. George's, South Moor, Co. Durham on 10 December, 1988. He had been ordained Deacon in the summer at Durham Cathedral (above). Members of the Franciscan family were with him to share his happiness on both occasions.

good cross-section of the men and women who are going to be involved in ministry as we move to the 21st century.

Images in the press of theological college life are often misleading. The Cambridge theological colleges are full and active, the teaching is thorough and lively, and there is a healthy balance of work, worship and relaxation.



On 28 October the Ven. David Walser instituted Brother Thomas Anthony S.S.F. as Vicar of S. Bene't's, Cambridge, where he had been priest-in-charge since October, 1985. On Christmas Eve Thomas Anthony's voice was heard by millions when he read one of the lessons in the King's College Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.

Looking at General Chapter

By SISTER ELIZABETH C.S.F.

Over 100 brothers and sisters gathered in Hilfield for a six-yearly General Chapter last September which was a time for

celebration, analysis, reflection and re-orientation. When a premature autumnal gale blew most tents down, it was also a time for drying-out!

'Who are we? Who could we become, in relation to the world, the church, and our inner journey? What helps or hinders who we could become?' So ran the theme.

For the sisters and brothers gathered at Hilfield the week was a memorable one, starting with some assessment of ourselves *now*, and trying, with Drs. Bob and Jeannette Renouf as facilitators, to discover the way forward.

On the second day Dr. Charles Elliott focussed on three examples (from India, Brazil and Britain) to illustrate for us how people can become trapped in the power structures of their particular society. This led to reflection on how these structures originate and are maintained, and on how we as individuals are responsible as voters yet are also trapped in the structures for which we are responsible.

So we came to talk about power, how it is distributed, used and abused, and how we might begin to empower one another for good. To be faced with where *we* might be in relation to the power structures of the world and to the poor was a humbling experience.

Bishop Peter Selby next took up the task of helping us to discover who we are and where we stand with regard to the church. We looked at the paradoxes of centrality and marginality, of strength and weakness, of securing and letting go. We were reminded that, unlike all other human groupings which are defined by *exclusion*, the church must discover its identity, at whatever cost, by whom it *includes*. Are we in the middle or at the edge in the providence of God? And, 'Who is Jesus Christ for us today?'

With Sister Gillian Clare C.S.Cl. the following day, we were plunged deep into mystery as we looked at our own inner journey, the pilgrimage towards truth and love in God. By a process of recognition and realization in the creative power of the Spirit we become more fully human, redeemed by love in obedience to love in harmony with all creation.

And that, we heard, means tolerance of our differences, involvement for and with others, bridging gaps, using structures for human good. 'Belonging' matters in a fragmented world, but interdependence in freedom and trust requires a balance of radical solitariness. I stand where I am, learning to love all in Christ.

With such massive inspiration we worked in our groups, gradually focusing towards the future. Finally, two brothers and two sisters were asked to speak on 'The vision as I see it'. They surprised us with their freshness and conviction. We were pointed again to the powerlessness of Jesus and the vulnerability which must be at our own heart.

To be where Christ is, unprotected, facing in ourselves the pain of the world, allows us to listen, to look, to touch others in mutual sharing and to find Christ in them. We want to rejoice in our diversity and live positively with each other's convictions and passions.

Rejoicing in the Solomons

There was excitement and rejoicing at Hautambu on S. Francis' Day, when a crowd gathered to join the brothers for the blessing of the new friary, La Verna. Over 500 visitors came from different places on the island of Guadalcanal, while others came from neighbouring islands.

The service was conducted by the Archbishop of Melanesia, the Most Rev. Amos Waiaru, who also preached. The ceremony began on the beach and moved round the grounds and buildings of the friary, accompanied by singing with the brothers playing traditional pan pipes. Each aspect of the life and work of the community was blessed.

Then came the eating, the speech-making and the dancing! The feast was at 12 noon, with beef, pork, seafood, and tropical fruits laid out on long lines of leaves. In the afternoon the celebrations continued with many groups performing custom dances and entertaining the crowds.

Beautiful Solomon Islands art, weaving and carving decorates the friary buildings and incorporates local traditions. The entrance sign carved by Brother Ashwin Siapu is decorated with dolphins and a cross. Brother Boniface Lee S.S.F. has contributed a striking and colourful painting of S. Francis to the

dining hall.

In the chapel the front of the wooden altar has been beautifully inlaid with intricate designs in shell by an aspirant, Gabriel Waga. The blessed sacrament is reserved in a tabernacle made in the shape of a village house made by Brother Ashwin. On either side of the altar are two carvings by Brother Boniface in a local hard-grained white wood, depicting creation's praise of its creator: shells, coral, fish, crab, pig, a man, woman and two children, flowers, fruit, a bird, stars, the sun and moon are all represented.

Behind the altar and on two of the walls are mats woven by Florence Makolo and her relations. The ceiling of the main part of the chapel consists of three 30-foot lengths of woven matting with a brown and white pattern. They represent many weeks work by Francis Rosana, from a neighbouring village, and Brother Manasseh Birahu S.S.F. Brother Manasseh has also carved and hollowed out the drum which signals the time for services.



Some of the brothers in front of the chapel at the Hautambu Friary.



The Kingdom's Paradoxical Priorities

by BROTHER RAMON S.S.F.



I am a human being. I am a citizen of this world. I am a Christian. Already the whole situation feels full of contradiction, and the integrity needed to live out any of these three vocations involves me in apparent impossibilities. But here lies the glory and excitement of paradox — and the horizon of the Christian examining personal priorities, and those of society.

In history and beyond it

First of all there is the paradox of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is both in and beyond history. It is here and now in the arena of social and political concern, and it has to do with basic equality, social justice, and the attitude of reconciliation which leads to the cross as a pattern of non-violence and risk. The Kingdom is also beyond. It is to be looked for, hoped for, worked for, but it is the Kingdom in which the visions and dreams of peace, immortality and glory are fulfilled.

There is certainly paradox here, for I must keep both these poles in mind. I must plan, work and give for the Kingdom as if it were only *here*. This may mean risking the disfavour of 'status quo' authorities if those authorities contradict the heart of the gospel. It is not a manifestation of the Kingdom to *kill* for its sake, but it may well be necessary to *die* for it. My task is to put my mouth and my life at the service of the Kingdom in such ways that will increase the compassion of God in the world.

Impotence and influence

Second, there is the matter of impotence and influence. With many Christians and humanists, I often feel a sense of helplessness in a country where there are still many choices to be made, but where I feel continual limitation placed upon my ability to communicate with, and move, authoritarian structures. If I am true to my inner voice and to gospel injunctions I must realise my own impotence with humility, but exercise my influence with open simplicity. For myself, I am continually faced with people who view my 'letting-go' of public communication to follow a more contemplative way, with friendly alarm. But tempered with wisdom and a certain joyful caution, the matter of impotence and influence are the paradoxical poles that are operative in my life as a human being, as a man of political awareness and as a person

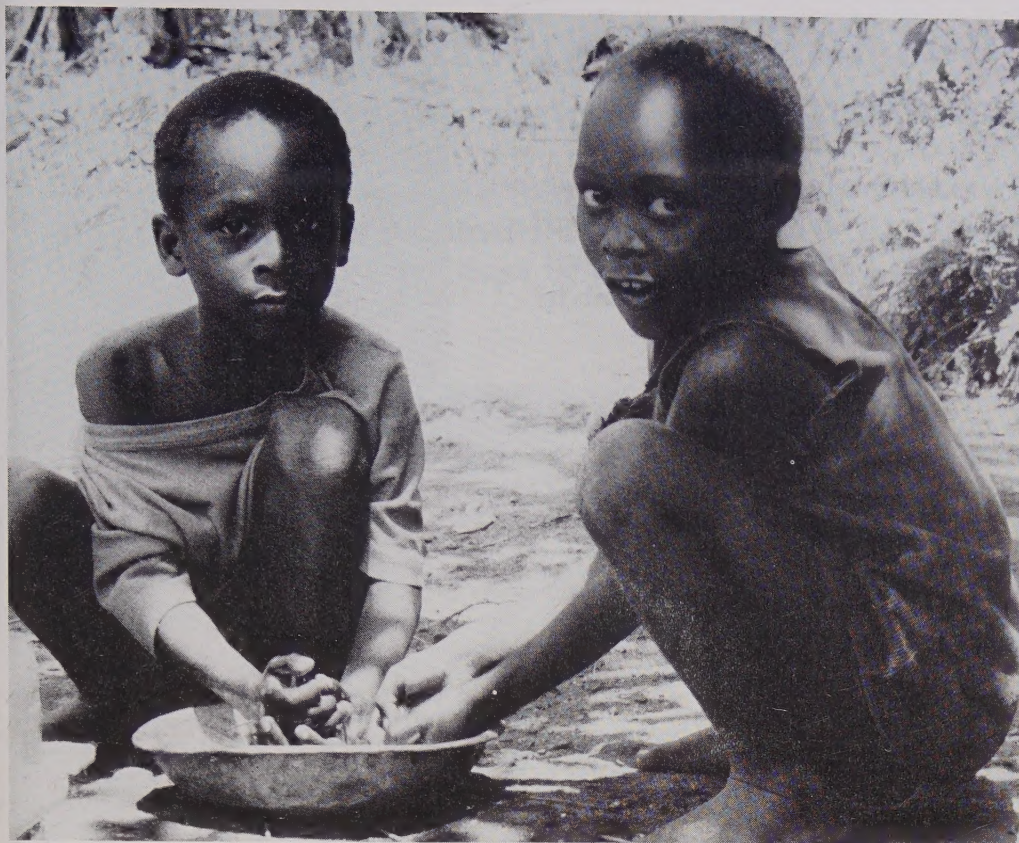
committed to Christ as the centre of my vision and hope.

Wisdom and foolishness

Third, I am brought up against the paradox of wisdom and foolishness. I am certainly in the 'fool' tradition, not only by my Celtic roots and personal temperament, but also by my spirituality which is rooted in the evangelical and Franciscan traditions. My Franciscan name is a variation on my baptismal name and looks toward Ramon Lull who is called 'the fool of love'. The wisdom which I affirm is that which is marked by compassionate thinking, where rationality is not divorced from the wisdom of the sage in planning the social and political realities of society. It seeks a world where children are born surrounded by love, free from abject poverty and assured of basic medical, educational and recreational facilities. The implications will be evident in the social services, education and health — not to mention defence!

The foolishness I affirm is that which is willing to cast away wealth and excess on a personal level, but also takes risks at the level of responsible society. It means giving away national wealth, and risking not to be defended at any level by nuclear weapons or strategies, and using the released revenue wisely in the seeming foolishness of a nation or continent at risk. I am aware of the paradoxes — some would say contradictions — of such a view, but it seems to me that there lies the path of gospel spirituality — foolish though it may seem.

I have recently been writing of Thomas Merton's contemplative and political attitude, and dealing in one chapter with his ironic essay, 'A Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann'. In it he says: 'One of the most disturbing facts that came out in the Eichmann trial was that a psychiatrist examined him and pronounced him *perfectly sane*. I do not doubt it at all, and that is precisely why I find it disturbing'. This penetrating essay shows the immense danger of appealing to the reasonableness and sanity of a world-system dedicated to the pursuit of



'The wisdom I affirm seeks a world where children are born surrounded by love, free from abject poverty and assured of basic medical, educational and recreational facilities'.

power, justified by men of an Eichmann mentality, whose basic lack of compassion and wisdom is hidden. 'He was thoughtful, orderly, unimaginative', says Merton; 'he had a profound respect for system, for law and order. He was obedient, loyal, a faithful officer of a great state. He served his government well'. And his task was the supervision of mass murder. It is totally perplexing, for he was pronounced sane.

As Merton points out, it is the sane ones, the well-adapted ones, who can without qualms aim the missiles and press the buttons that will initiate a nuclear catastrophe. The sane ones will have perfectly good reasons, logical, well-adjusted reasons for firing the shot. They will obey orders that have come sanely down the chain of command, and because of their sanity they will have no qualms. When the missiles take off, it will be no mistake! Worldly sanity, based on the pursuit of power, wealth, ambition, leads to death. The foolish wisdom of God is life-giving, though it may be persecuted to the death by the 'sane' ones of the world.

Affirmation and dialogue

Fourth, I am committed to both affirmation and dialogue. Now, these may not appear to be either contradictory or paradoxical to some. But for the 'committed' person, especially with an evangelical or catholic tradition there are immense tensions in this polarity. To be committed means the understanding and acceptance of a particular vision and the desire to share it in word and life. Certainly, commitment to Christ demands one's whole

life — body and soul, heart and mind. Is this compatible with true dialogue? Such dialogue means listening with one's whole being to views, philosophies and faiths other than one's own, and listening with such openness and integrity that there is the possibility of true sharing and real change. It is not entering into a conversation merely to wait for an opening so that my point can be made, my view affirmed, my truth pressed home. This seems to call into question the assurance with which I have just stated my previous convictions. Indeed, if they are convictions, how can I enter into dialogue of this kind? Conversation, yes — but dialogue, no!

This problem is one which every Christian must face, and which the church at large must face in our own society with its social, political and religious diversity today. Because the world has become so small, and extremist groups have become so vociferous, it is our duty both to proclaim and listen — and both these things must be done at some depth, with both wisdom and common sense. I want to listen, recognise and embrace everything that is good, true and compassionate, from whatever source it comes. I want to share, give and proclaim all that I have discovered in Christ, so that others may enter into the glory of it all.

And this brings me back to the beginning. I am a human being. I am a citizen of this world. I am a Christian. And in this world I long for a closer approximation to the Kingdom of God. And I wait with joy and enthusiasm for the coming of Christ in glory, when the 'eschatological' Kingdom will be established both in and beyond the present historical scene.

Reaching out in Sussex

by BROTHER DONALD S.S.F.

Mix together six villages, a mission team spanning three denominations, and a send-off by a bishop, an abbot and a moderator, and what do you get? The answer is a recent successful venture in Christian renewal and outreach in Sussex.

The ball was set rolling by the Roman Catholic congregations centring on Worth Abbey. When they were considering a parish mission one of their members suggested an ecumenical mission similar to one then in progress in Guildford's central churches. A delegation visited the Guildford mission and it was decided to ask if the same team could set up an appropriate programme for the Sussex villages of West Hoathly, Sharpthorne, Balcombe, Turners Hill, Crawley Down and Worth Abbey.

The Guildford team included Brother Donald from Plaistow, Father Anthony MacDowell, O.F.M. Cap. from Pantasaph, and John Johansen-Berg of the United Reformed Church Community of the Reconciliation near Bromsgrove. Others joined them for the Sussex mission in October, which was called Mission 88. They lived at Worth Abbey and its adjacent lay community houses.

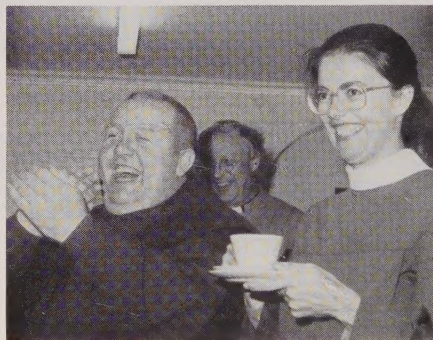
The team was commissioned by the Anglican Bishop of Horsham, the Abbot of Worth and the Moderator of the Southern Province of the United Reformed Church. The next day and successive Sundays the team members (including Sister Jannafer and Brother Andrew Christopher from S.S.F.) preached to the various congregations. For some time several of the Anglican churches have been shared locally by the Roman Catholics, and discussion group meetings have been shared by members of all local churches. Ministers have worked closely together for some time, which enabled the mission to build on a deep spirit of co-operation and mutual concern.

During the fortnight the team and local people met together to pray morning and evening prayer in all the parish churches in turn. Team members addressed house groups, and visited day centres, schools and mother and toddler groups. Children had a day of celebration when they presented their own offerings of drama, art and music.

A special evening of discussion attended by a large number of people prepared for a much-valued healing service. Teach-ins on basic Christianity took place in the villages in turn, and were always well supported by the other villages; each evening provided a reminder of our common faith and gave a strong challenge to Christian commitment. Other events included a pop concert,

youth barbecue, men's breakfasts, flower festivals and a question and answer session.

All the events led up to final parties and a Celebration and Thanksgiving in the Abbey. Our conclusion was that relations between the churches had grown closer than ever. Well aware of continuing differences in tradition we nonetheless found our bond of fellowship a most powerful support and encouragement in the midst of an increasingly materialistic world. Many people made a new and much deeper commitment to Christ, and all who took part felt refreshed and inspired by the ever fresh challenge of the Good News of Christ in today's world.



Another mission, this time at S. James', Louth: Brother Mark Nicholas S.S.F. and Sister Joy C.S.F. in a light-hearted moment.

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Letters

Benfleet,
Essex.

29th November, 1988

The reason I stopped subscribing to the old magazine in 1984 (after 30 years) was that I found the articles appearing were becoming more and more intellectually boring. We are not all 'academics' and I would have liked to have seen a more commonplace touch now and again. However, I am very interested to hear that in 1989 the magazine will appear in a new format. This I cannot miss, so I enclose my subscription for 1989.

I. Rattenbury

St. Asaph,
Clwyd.

2nd December, 1988

As a long-time subscriber to *The Franciscan*, I write to say how much I have enjoyed the varied and interesting content of the articles and the wide range of subjects presented to us during the last 30 years. No less have I enjoyed keeping up with the movements of the community, and it is good to know that this will still happen when the new magazine appears.

It is always exciting to be in at the start of a new venture, so many thanks again for the magazine that has been and best wishes for the new one to come and may it continue to help, inspire and keep us praying for each other and for God's Kingdom.

M. Morgan

Published by the First Order European Provinces of the Society of S. Francis, a religious order in the Anglican Communion. The Society of S. Francis is committed to follow Christ in the way of S. Francis of Assisi, in humility, love and joy.

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Instruments of Peace

by BROTHER TERRY S.S.F.

A senior Soviet diplomat and Buddhist monks are among the varied visitors drawn to Hilfield Friary by the 'Instruments of Peace' days of reflection held there over the last three years.



Brothers Mark Douglas and Christopher S.S.F. with visiting Buddhist monks at Hilfield Friary, and (left) Brother Emil, a Coptic Egyptian.

The lead in organizing the days was taken by Brother John Francis, who told me: 'I discovered bit by bit that there was much common ground shared by people who recognized a "spiritual" dimension to life, but often never had a chance to meet. They were people who were outside the church and yet who had a vision of good news and were struggling to live it out. I met them on parish missions, and through groups like the Dorset Peace Council and the Green Party.

'I see Francis as standing on the edge of the society he lived in, and able to relate similarly to people on the fringe. I wanted in some way likewise to be in dialogue with people who have important insights to offer us but are not often heard'.

The outcome was the 'Instruments of Peace' series of day events, 'intended' says John Francis, 'to bring Christians and non-Christians together at Hilfield to look at world issues in creative ways'.

One of the first was called 'Justpeace' and saw some 'marvellous teaching' on Gandhi and peacemaking from the late Bill Lash. One of the biggest events was in spring 1988, 'East Meets West in Dorset', when the keynote speaker was Mr. S. Shilov, the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in London. This was

attended by over 70 people — and by the Special Branch, who made a total of three visits.

Recalls John Francis: 'Mr. Shilov's speech was fascinating because of his great openness and ability to criticize his own society while still being loyal to it'.

Other day events have explored conflict resolution and Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Recently there was a study day on AIDS chaired by the district medical health officer, Dr. Maria, and addressed by Father Bill Kirkpatrick, who is working in the Earls Court area of London. Contacts made through earlier events led to Hilfield hosting a retreat in October for 18 Buddhists and members of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

John Francis notes that the recent General Chapter was very affirmative of 'this kind of approach, whereby we provide an alternative place where people can meet, share and encourage one another. There is a need for this. So many of the social and economic policies being enacted appeal to our darker, self-centred side — we are even told that there is "no such thing as society", just individuals. This needs to be countered by those who see another way shown by Jesus and the gospel'.

Reviews

Bill Kirkpatrick, AIDS: Sharing the pain, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988, 146 pp. £4.95.

In one chapter, before quoting the experience of a person just diagnosed as HIV positive (i.e.: receiving a positive result to an AIDS antibody test), Bill Kirkpatrick uses the phrase 'inside the situation'. This could well describe the position of the writer himself, and from which he has produced this knowledgeable and remarkable book. A priest, and a former senior nursing officer, with an extensive current ministry of counselling and supportive care, he writes with unusual authority, considerable perception and a deep compassion.

The medical section with which his book begins is clear and concise, concentrating on the basic facts as known so far. The material is presented in language easily understood by persons with no professional nursing/medical training.

The title could not have been more carefully chosen, nor be more apt, since it is only in 'sharing the pain' that any one of us can hope to reach the level of non-judgemental acceptance, care and understanding which is necessary for all involved in, or concerned about the problems presented by AIDS. This is so not only at the level of one-to-one, but in terms of the global crisis with which we shall all be confronted at some point.

Father Kirkpatrick touches on death, bereavement and ministry, but also the ethical and moral perspectives highlighted by AIDS, as well as its challenge to the church. No one could imagine that the author acquired his insights into so many aspects without great personal cost in so demanding a ministry as he now carries out among persons with AIDS. Each chapter reveals the fruit of that cost, and can only inspire the reader as well as inform him/her.

The excellent list of available services, plus the glossary and bibliography at the end of the book, make it a 'must' for those wishing to know more, who need a concise resource book, or who simply feel they need help in forming their own awareness as a Christian.

ANGELO S.S.F.

Alan Ecclestone, Scaffolding of the Spirit, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987, 146 pp. £4.95.

This is a lovely book with distilled wisdom shining from page to page. At the risk of a relatively ignorant reader commenting on a scholarly book, the author, in writing about the gospel according to John, goes a long way in what might be called form criticism, but in a way that gives the kind of food for thought that can lead to prayer.

IRENE C.S.Cl.

LIVERPOOL VENTURE

A new phase has begun at S. Francis House, Liverpool, where a succession of brothers has lived and worked in both the city and the diocese in ministries ranging from industrial mission to caring for the handicapped.

A year ago the house became a place particularly concerned with the training of novices. During their novitiate brothers now come to Liverpool for up to a year in order to gain experience in urban life and ministry.

As part of the process they reflect on the experience with each other and with the professed brothers at the house. Brother Samuel, the Novice Guardian, comments: 'Perhaps most important of all they come to explore and discover a Franciscan spirituality for the city which will equip them to live and serve in our houses — most of which are in cities — in the future'.

One of the novices, Brother Barry, is a trained gardener and uses his skills in his work with the L'Arche Community. In his own account of his experiences there, *Brother Barry writes:*

L'Arche is a community of mentally handicapped people and assistants who live, pray and work together; their houses are quite near to S. Francis House. As part of my novitiate I have worked with L'Arche, working alongside handicapped and assistants in their gardening project called the Barrow.

The thing which I have learned from L'Arche is that it's OK to be weak!

I will never forget my first day at work in the Barrow walking through the door and instantly being welcomed by Ian who took a great interest in me, not Barry the friar, but just in me, Barry. At tea break Stella noticed that I'd not been to L'Arche before and gave me a lovely comforting smile; Colin grabbed hold of my rope and sat nearby, and quietly held my hand — he is unable to speak — he lovingly just held my hand which itself spoke volumes.

I was worried that I had nothing to give these little beautiful people of God, nothing; so it took me a few weeks to relax and to realize that I first had to let go and let the poor and weak give to me.

These people share with me the small gifts of the Kingdom. They show me how really to listen to others in their pain, how always to have a sense of play with each other, how not to take life too seriously, but to laugh at myself. Perhaps the most beautiful of the gifts that my friends at L'Arche have given is how to say sorry.

All this enriches my Franciscan vocation, it touches on my own poverty and enables me to recognize it as a gift from God.



Brother Barry and Colin in the Barrow workshop.

Minister's Letter

Brother Anselm, Provincial Minister of the First Order brothers, writes:

Many of us who experienced the General Chapter of our Province at the end of August, 1988, felt that we had been given a sort of new birth, a fresh vision, a renewal of vocation — in our individual lives, and as a community of pilgrims in the way of Francis. It was a time for the sharing not just of the joys, but also of the hurts and wounds. It was a time for celebration, and a time for healing. So it's quite appropriate that we should simultaneously have found a new way of sharing our continuing news and life (and thought?) with you our friends and readers in a new manifestation of *The Franciscan*. Let's hope that it will prove to be as right for its times as its predecessor was for the last three decades.

As I help to break the bottle of bubbly on the bows of the frail little craft and as it sets off down the slipway, I hope that the sound of breaking glass will act as a reminder to us all of two things.

One is, that we are to learn in *all* to be reported in these pages, in word or in picture, of God's loving care for us. It's tempting to restrict his providence to what appears superficially

to be 'good' news, and just miss out the other bits — which serves the truth no better than some newspapers which carry nothing but 'bad' news. That's not to say that it can ever be right to court scandal in such a way as to damage the cause of God's kingdom, but it has to be remembered that in this world if news is to be any good at all it must include the sufferings and the setbacks, without which joy and celebration are quite bland and meaningless. The gospel is that *Jesus died and rose*.

The other? At this moment it is *crucial* for our circulation to grow. Please don't be complacent about this. We don't want to make big profits, but we do want to reach more people — *all* the Companions, *all* members of the Third Order, and many, many other friends. So, old and valued subscriber, don't just read this and then let it get buried under all those other things which clamour to be read — pass it on, lend it, leave it lying about. It will attract new subscribers as a magnet attracts iron filings. More important, we shall find new friends.

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